A nice October walk nearly turned into disaster for members of Keighley Group when after an “almighty crack” a large tree in the hedgerow came down towards them. Jeff Maud of Keighley Group takes up the story:

“Today we had 24 intrepid souls. The weather was blustery with brief sharp showers and myriads of rainbows, but it was mild for this time in October. We initially walked through Pateley Bridge centre before doing a ninety degree right turn up a straight steep path, which at the time I did not realise was a dismantled railway, hence the disused quarry at the top. On a level path we joined Wath Lane with lovely views of Gouthwaite Reservoir, but soon lost height to walk through the tiny village of Wath itself.

We crossed the Nidd at Wath Bridge and immediately began our ascent up to Spring Hill and the hamlet of Heathfield. On descending from Heaton Wood, we were buffeted by the strong west winds. Back markers Ken, Alex, Peter and me were just nearing the field gate when there was a tremendous gust and an almighty crack as the large tree in the hedge split its trunk and came down towards us. We all did our best to go backwards and fortunately it missed us all but only by about five feet. Judith and Fiona had both been touched by some smaller branches, but both were all right. Judith had a damaged walking stick and Fiona a broken sandwich box in her rucksack. The bulk of the group had gone past the tree only seconds earlier, so they came dashing back to view the damage. Everyone was relieved that nobody was badly injured. It was a lucky escape!

Once we had gathered our wits, I think we were still in shock. It was decided not to proceed up the valley to the mines, and in view of the previous happenings, we went down through the caravan site by Foster Beck and continued by the River Nidd back to Pateley Bridge. We had just done about seven miles. I think it was enough for this memorable or not so memorable day.”

Jeff Maud

WALKERS NARROWLY ESCAPE FALLING TREE!

Inside this issue:

FOOTPATH SURVEY 2014
High vegetation by far the biggest problem.

BOOK REVIEW
The Yorkshire Dales National Park: A Celebration Of 60 Years by Colin Speakman.

WALK LEEDS
Leeds Council unanimously backs our summer festival of walks.

CLAIMING FOR STILE INJURIES
Alan Friswell discusses how walkers might seek compensation if they are injured on poorly-maintained stiles.

SHARE YOUR PHOTOS AND WALK REPORTS WITH US ON FACEBOOK!

Have you been out and about (either on your own or with your group) and taken some cracking photos along the way? Then why not share your photographs and walk reports with us on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RamblersYorkshire

On our Facebook page you will also find regular walking and outdoor news from our area, alongside campaign updates and photographs.

Visit the Area website www.ramblersyorkshire.org or join us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/RamblersYorkshire
LEEDS COUNCIL BACKS FESTIVAL OF WALKS

A full Council meeting at Leeds Civic Hall gave unanimous support to WalkLeeds, and asked for its decision to be referred to the leading executive officer. Martin Bennett, leading a delegation of five members of the Ramblers’ committee that is organising WalkLeeds, made an impressive speech about the forthcoming festival and the benefits of walking for public health and recreation, and he was enthusiastically clapped by members of the Council. The Council decision is a further valuable step in bringing Leeds Council fully on board as part of the Festival. Planning for the Festival is already taking place in close liaison with the Leeds Rights of Way Section.

The programme of walks is filling up nicely, with several affiliated clubs and other groups offering walks. The final programme is likely include approximately 50 walks. It is intended to finalise the programme by early January, and have the leaflets printed and ready for distribution by the end of February. An attractive design for the leaflet has already been drafted. A special website for WalkLeeds is already up and running.

RADICAL CHANGES IN PROPOSED SHAKE-UP OF GROUPS AND AREAS

Proposals have recently been announced to transform the whole volunteer structure of the Ramblers’ Association. The proposals are announced in “A New Governance Structure for The Ramblers” published by the Governance Working Group set up by the Board of Trustees. The proposals have not been endorsed by the Board of Trustees and in the words of the Working Group “the ideas contained in this document are ours alone.” The proposals for local Groups seek to encourage a much wider range of groups and to make it much easier for them to be set up and to function. The proposals for Areas are more radical, and seek both to tighten links with local Groups and to tighten the links with the Chief Executive. Members who wish to know more about the proposals, and also about the New Vision, and to comment on them if they wish, can obtain full details if they Google “Ramblers governance proposals”.

The consultation on the documents ends on 31st December 2014. The West Riding Rambler does not seek at this stage seek to influence the consultation by offering a view on the proposals.

Visit the Area website www.ramblersyorkshire.org for more area news and past issues
DIANE HALL RETIRES AS CALDERDALE SECRETARY

Diane Hall has regularly travelled to Leeds by public transport to attend the West Riding Area Council meetings four times a year. She says that as at the age of 80 it is time to pass on the baton. We are extremely grateful for all the work she has done for the Ramblers over the years and indeed she will be a hard act to follow. I don’t think Diane knows what retirement is with her love of travel and tending to her lovely garden, helping with local environment groups and being involved in the local community. She has led countless walks. She has been so efficient in keeping members up to date. On behalf of Calderdale Group she has regularly travelled to Leeds by public transport to attend the West Riding Area Council meetings four times a year. She says that as at the age of 80 it is time to pass on the baton. We are extremely grateful for all the work she has done for the Ramblers over the years and indeed she will be a hard act to follow. I don’t think Diane knows what retirement is with her love of travel and tending to her lovely garden, helping with local environment groups and being involved in the local community. She still finds time to lead walks with the Ramblers, which incidentally are very popular with her extensive knowledge of the local area. You may see her at the West Riding Area AGM at Ilkley doing the teas. She seems to be able to do anything with commitment and enthusiasm.

This indeed the end of an era for the Ramblers’ Association and we are very lucky to have had Diane’s knowledge and skills. Happy retirement, Diane!

Judy Gannon, Chair, Calderdale Ramblers

NEW PERMISSIVE PATHS PROVIDE SUPERB NEW WALK AT BRAMHAM

A superb new circular walk at Bramham can now be enjoyed thanks to several new permissive paths that have been opened close to Bramham Park. The new paths enable walkers who have used the popular public footpath across Bramham Park via The Temple to return to Bramham by an attractive well-wooded route that completely avoids the use of the busy road from Thorner to Bramham.

The permissive paths start at the junction of Mangrill Lane and Bramham Road (GR SE 398414) then use a field path to 399418 where the road is crossed to a field path leading to the edge of woodland at 396419. From there, a new permissive path through woodland leads back to the road at 402422. Without crossing the road, walkers can then follow the bridle way (but beware ford!) to 402423 and then use a new permissive path through woodland and fields (and also close to the invisible site of the medieval village of Wotthersome) to the road junction at 408428. From there, a new permissive path with pleasant views goes just to the south of the busy Thorner to Bramham road (a former Roman road) and back to Bramham.

The circular walk across Bramham Park and back to Bramham via the new path is six and a half miles. It will be one of the many attractive walks in the forthcoming WalkLeeds, the Leeds Festival of Walks.

However, there is another big bonus! At GR 402423 the new permissive paths connect with public paths leading to Thorner. This means walkers can now do a pretty circular walk from Thorner via Thorner Moor, Mangrill Lane and Kennels Lane, and for a good day-length walk there’s now an attractive and almost tarmacless circular from Bramham to Thorner via Bramham Park one way and Kennels Lane to return, and this can be extended to include Hetchell Crags and Pompocali.

DAVID GIBSON STEPS DOWN FROM NORTH YORKS LAF – REPLACEMENT NEEDED

David urges a successor to come forward:

I have represented West Riding Area of the RA on the Local Access Forum (LAF) since its inception 10 years ago. I am now retiring and not standing for re-appointment. I hope that another member of West Riding Area will apply to take my place. It would be useful to live in North Yorkshire, but this is not essential as long as you can show an interest in access in North Yorkshire.

The LAF covers the whole of North Yorkshire excluding the two national parks. It meets in Northallerton four times a year, plus occasional sub-group meetings, usually in Northallerton.

The LAF is a statutory body and is completely independent of the NYCC although it is appointed, funded and hosted by the Council. It exists to advise on the improvement of public access to land for the purposes of open air recreation and enjoyment of the area. Thus it covers rights of way and access land created by the CROW Act. Membership consists of users (walkers, riders, cyclists etc.), landholders, and people with relevant interests such as archaeology, wildlife.

Although two other Yorkshire RA Areas are represented it is very useful to have RA members covering the whole county. Appointment is by interview, usually involving a discussion with other applicants, and the next round will be held around March 2015, and will be advertised widely before then. Minutes and documents of previous meetings can be found on the County website. If you wish to discuss applying to be a member of the LAF please email me on cdgibson@talktalk.net or Tel: 01242 561 942.

THE COACH RAMBLES NEED YOU

Contrary to an age old myth, seats are available on the monthly West Riding Area Coach Rambles. Do come and join us for a very enjoyable day out. Pick up in Leeds, Thornbury and Bradford (occasionally other pick ups depending on destination). A varied selection of A, B, and A+ walks followed by a meal in a pub or hotel and good company.

For further information contact Val Bamforth 01274 591678 or Hilary Bulmer 01924 863860. We look forward to seeing you.

Diane Davies
FOOTPATH SURVEY 2014
High vegetation by far the biggest problem

The 2014 survey covered 490 km (306 miles) of rights of way across the six local authorities of West Riding Area (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, North Yorkshire and Wakefield). The paths surveyed were in rural parts of these local authorities, “rural” defined as predominantly not built-up. 30 path surveyors (many working with companions) took part in the survey in 2014, and each surveyor walked all the public footpaths, bridle ways, and other routes with public access in four or more O.S. Explorer Map 1km squares.

The surveyors were asked to record all the places where the paths they checked were not “legally compliant” and to provide brief details of each problem they recorded. Stringent criteria were used. Stiles, for instance, were recorded as not legally compliant only if attempting to use them involved considerable difficulty to avoid injury (including cuts from exposed barbed wire). Vegetation blocking a path was recorded as a serious problem only when brambles/gorse/nettles/branches and other vegetation (excluding long grass) rendered the path impossible to use without a walker risking being scratched or stung (and perhaps one may add tearing clothing). Cropping and ploughing problems were recorded where the legal requirements were not met and appropriate width on cross-field paths or headland paths had not been left (even though the crop height across the path might have been low at the time of recording, it would have presented an almost impenetrable barrier when the crop was fully grown). All returns from the path surveyors were carefully checked after being submitted. Cases where the path was technically not “legally compliant”, but could be followed safely and without difficulty were excluded. The survey results therefore refer to serious path problems that are not only illegal but where by any reasonable standard the path user would have considerable difficulty in continuing the walk.

On the 490 km of paths surveyed, 172 serious problems were recorded. Summarised, there is on average a serious problem every 2.85 km (or every 1.78 mile). Because nearly all of the squares had been surveyed in the three previous years of the survey and all problems notified to the local authority, the 2014 figure probably records a lower incidence of serious problems than if the squares had been randomly allocated. So the reality is probably even worse than the survey indicates.

As well as providing a measure of the overall state of the Area’s paths, the survey provides valuable information on the distribution of the various kinds of serious path problems:

- Obstruction by vegetation 35.5%
- Dangerous stiles, gates and bridges 22.7% (stiles 13%)
- Obstruction by crops 16.3%
- No stile or gate in the fence/hedge/wall (i.e path completely blocked) 14.5%
- Obstruction to path surface by permanent deep water or dumping of materials 8.7%
- Obstruction by ploughing 1.7%

As a personal observation, vegetation obstruction on enclosed paths is an increasingly common problem, though the survey was not detailed enough to provide information on this.

In addition to the above problems, the 2014 survey found 102 cases of signs missing where a right of way leaves a public road. This reduces to 61 if the many missing signposts in a built-up area overlapping two squares are excluded, but even this lower figure records a significant breach of statutory duty (and the built-up area...
is still missing its signposts). The path surveyors were also invited to comment on features that made the paths they surveyed less than easy to follow, and many commented on inadequate waymarking.

The survey overall has produced important findings. We now have good evidence that in 2014 there is a serious problem on less than every 3km of public path in West Riding Area. The survey has also revealed the frequency of different sorts of path problems and produced clear evidence that high vegetation is now by far the most commonly encountered problem. All this evidence is reliable, produced from our own resources; we no longer need to be reliant on rights of way information produced (or not produced) by other bodies. The survey has led to large numbers of problems being reported to local authorities, and the footpath surveyors have said that in many cases the problems have been dealt with. All these points suggest that the survey has been a considerable success and well worth doing.

There is an important issue about making use of the survey information (which we may or may not wish to do), and certainly it tells us where we might focus our efforts. The survey gives a powerful hint that many path problems could be solved if local authorities made much greater use of their powers of enforcement. Vegetation accounts for 35.5% of the total of serious problems, and a considerable reduction in this percentage could be achieved if local authorities used their powers to deal with overhanging growth. Effective enforcement would solve all crop problems (16.3%), and all stile problems (13%). Over 30% of the serious problems on rural rights of way in areas of arable farming could be cured by getting tough with farmers on crop obstruction. Calderdale could cure nearly a quarter of its problems if it got tough with landowners on stiles. In these times of financial stringency a much greater willingness by local authorities to use their powers of enforcement would be a cheap and effective way forward. This could be urged strongly at LAF meetings and liaison meetings with local authority rights of way staff - and the survey provides the necessary ammunition.

At a Do-It-Yourself level, walks leaders could include a few sparsely trodden paths in their chosen routes, and, a radical suggestion that breaks long-existing practice, local Groups could consider how as part of their Walks Programme they could walk all the paths on their territory. This will not transform the condition of our rights of way, but at least it will put a mark of use on them, and if secateurs are carried remove some overhanging branches. It will also let landowners know we are still around. Furthermore, it strengthens the link between walking and footpath work. All path problems should be reported - local authorities cannot do anything about path problems if they do not know they are there!

Thanks to all the people who took part in the footpath survey between 2011 and 2014 (their names were published in the July 2014 West Riding Rambler), and doing it in such a conscientious and painstaking way. I think we all enjoyed doing it, at least most of the time, and something substantial was achieved. I particularly thank Tony Ottery who put in a tremendous amount of work, and we all wish him a full recovery from his present illness. KW

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THE YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK: A CELEBRATION OF 60 YEARS

COLIN SPEAKMAN

This is a very appropriate time to publish this book. This is not only because it marks the 60th Anniversary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park (YDNP) but because issues are currently being raised about the nature of national parks and the powers they should have, as is witnessed by the recent issue of planning permission for Dales barns (see WRR July 2014). The second thing to say is that Colin has done an excellent job in writing this book. This isn’t perhaps an easy book to write, not because the material isn’t easily available and accessible as it obviously is, but because a book with this agenda could have become a prosaic historical record. On the contrary, it is a pleasure to read, and this is particularly because of Colin’s skill as a writer in presenting administrative developments in the evolution of the YDNP in a racy and interesting way, and to suffuse them with his own obvious enthusiasms for his themes.

The book traces the origin of the national parks in England and Wales from the time they were proposed in the 1930s by organisations such as the RA, the CPRE, and the YHA. Our national parks were not to follow the model of the “wilderness parks” such as Yosemite in the USA. Instead, in Colin’s words, the national parks over here were “based as much on a cultural heritage of well-loved landscapes as on wildlife conservation”. The vision of the national parks in England and Wales as a treasured “cultural landscape” is a dominant theme throughout the book. In the Yorkshire Dales the cultural landscape is based on upland livestock farming with its distinctive pattern of stone walls, barns and pretty villages.

Colin describes in detail the early years of the YDNP, how at first it was effectively two national parks, a West Riding one, and a North Riding one, both strands underpinned by a Joint Advisory Committee with little clout. It was not until 1974 that there was a YDNP Committee with some real independent powers and its own staff, and not until 1997 that it became an independent National Park Authority. Colin takes the story of the park right through to the present when it is having to come to terms with a number of issues particularly the protection of a cultural landscape based on upland farming which itself is changing quite rapidly (see the specially commissioned chapter by Dales farmer Anthony Bradley). Colin’s chapter on the future of the national park is very thought provoking. The YDNP left to market forces and particularly those affecting farming could gradually become a very different type of landscape. Which raises questions of the sort of landscape we wish to see and the resources needed to achieve it.

It is a beautifully presented book and the many photographs, all chosen by David Joy, are not only a delight but a valuable historical record. Compulsive and compulsory reading for all who love the Yorkshire Dales.

Keith Wadd
WEST RIDING AREA
ANNUAL REPORT
2014

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Readers of this report may perhaps wonder why there is any need to make radical changes to how Areas and Groups function. West Riding Area functions well. All the committees do a lot of good work, meetings take place no more than is necessary to consider matters of importance, and to authorise members and officers acting on behalf of the Ramblers, and to make them accountable.

A considerable amount of good access, countryside and footpath work is taking place, the Area produces a vibrant quarterly journal, the West Riding Rambler, and puts together a Walks Programme of over 600 walks during the year. It has organised a rigorous survey of the state of the Area’s right of way, a collective enterprise involving over 80 members. West Riding Area is currently organising a Festival of Walks which promises to be a considerable regional success and includes walks from Ramblers’ local Groups, affiliated and other Groups. Considerable successful collaboration with Leeds Council is taking place as preparations for the Festival proceed.

All this is a powerful record of achievement on the part of West Riding Area, and shows that with energetic commitment and good organisation an Area working in a fairly autonomous way to achieve the Ramblers’ charitable objects can do so with great success. It is also to be noted that the Group structure in West Riding Area operates in a flexible way, and, although the footpath work remains territorially based for good reason, many members walk with and belong to Groups other than the ones they were initially allocated to, because the day and time of the walk suits their personal arrangements, or they like the distance and pace of the walks, or the places visited etc. What has evolved across the Area is a programme that suits all tastes and capabilities.

Mike Church, Area Chairman

SECRETARY’S REPORT

West Riding Area coordinates all our activities (both Group and Area initiatives) so that we all work together for the Ramblers’ Association as effectively as our resources permit. Throughout the territory of West Riding Area we are monitoring paths and attempting to deal with the many problems that arise, attempting to protect from major threats the countryside we walk in, and seeking to make the right to roam work effectively. Our sub-committees (see separate reports) enable issues to be considered in detail and action to be coordinated, and they bring together representatives from Groups and other RA members who have a particular interest in the committee’s area of work. The West Riding Rambler is the journal for our Area with news and features of interest for all our members. We also publish the West Riding Area Walks Programme with around 660 walks throughout our territory, which provides a rich offering for our members and the wider public.

The Area Council of West Riding Area has had four general meetings, and an extra one to deal specifically with motions to be discussed at General Council in April. The meetings take place in Leeds and are attended by the Area’s officers, the chair and secretary of the sub-committees, representatives elected by the AGM, and a representative of each of the Groups in West Riding Area. Each Group is entitled to send a representative, and he/she has the opportunity to report on the Group’s activities and to raise matters of concern. The meeting considers reports from the Treasurer and Membership Secretary, discusses the latest minutes of each of its sub-committees, and makes decisions on important issues and matters referred to it.

The planning of a ‘Festival of Walks’ in Leeds has been undertaken by the West Riding Area of the Ramblers and its local Groups. The date for this public promotion of walking in the Leeds area is from 31st May 2015 to 7th June 2015. The official name of the event is ‘WalkLeeds’ and it is seen as a great opportunity for walkers to get together and show the general public what a superb activity walking is. The Countryside Committee has monitored a proposed large housing development for north east Leeds. It takes in land to the north of Skeltons Lane as far as Bramley Grange farm and then includes land east of Whinmoor extending nearly as far as Thorne Lane.

Good news regarding the Woodhall Bridge which provides a popular public bridleway crossing of the River Wharfe between East Keswick and Sicklinghall has finally been announced. The bridge which was damaged by floods is to be repaired and will cost in the region of £250,000. Again on the subject of bridges, a planning application by the Burley Bridge Association on which the West Riding Area is represented for a footbridge over the River Wharfe at Burley-in-Wharfedale has been submitted. If the bridge was to be erected it would eliminate the need for crossing the river by the stepping stones and give walkers a direct all-the-year-round route from Burley to Askwith and the Nidderdale AONB.

The West Riding Area has written to High Speed Two (HS2) Limited. In our area, within the boundaries of Leeds and Wakefield, the proposed HS2 route affects 37 public rights of way and 4 permissive paths. The West Riding Area’s letter states that we will be seeking “high quality replacement crossings for several rights of way”, “satisfactory diversion routes”, “enhancements to the public rights of way network wherever possible”, “habitat enhancements along the corridor” and “mitigation screening and planting”.

Carl Richman, Secretary
ACCESS SUB-COMMITTEE

10 years after its formation, the Access Committee has decided that insufficient new work is coming in to warrant its continuation. The Area Council has accepted this, and the Access Committee no longer exists. I shall continue as Access Officer, and report to the Area Council any access problems. Access will continue to be included on the Area Council agenda. Please advise me of any access problems you are aware of and I shall try and help. As I live in the far west of West Riding Area it would be helpful if a map accompanied the details. I will also help with any access to open access land problems, but these are more intractable.

The last matter the committee was dealing with was access to access land in Nidderdale. We contacted all the landowners who might be prepared to allow access to open access land where there were no convenient public rights of way and access to us seemed to be needed. This did not achieve any success. We then involved North Yorkshire County Council, the access authority. They agreed to talk to two landowners on the west of the dale, but were unable to achieve any agreement. They also spoke to several landowners around Southwaite Reservoir to see if agreement could be reached to divert the Nidderdale Way from the busy road beside the reservoir. Again this proved fruitless.

North Yorkshire County Council rights of way section are suffering a 40% cut in their total budget next year i.e. staff, maintenance and capital. This will happen for three years and no one knows what will happen after this. As a result they have said that they will not engage in any access work during this period.

Open access land has to be reviewed every 10 years after the maps were confirmed. The first review was to have been this year but the government put it back for 2 years as part of their cuts and have now postponed it till 2019. You will hear from me (or my successor) when a new date for the review is announced.

David Gibson

COUNTRYSIDE SUB-COMMITTEE

Last year’s report began by highlighting the lack of support offered by Ramblers’ Central Office for the work of Group and Area Countryside Secretaries, the lobbying of the chair of the Board of Trustees at the AGM, and the temporary appointment of Tom Lewins. Twelve months on, I am delighted to report that Tom now has a permanent position at Central Office.

The committee responded to the consultation on “Greater Flexibilities for Change of Use” urging the Government not to implement the proposals to allow the re-use of redundant agricultural buildings for housing without the need for planning approval. The outcome of the consultation was that the Government agreed not to apply the new permitted development rights to National Parks, AONBs, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Consequently, the Yorkshire Dales National Park, and Nidderdale AONB, both areas of greatest concern to West Riding Area, would be guaranteed protection from these permitted development rights. The committee noted the inevitable application to extract timber from Greenfield Forest via the Cam High Road to which a strong objection was lodged last year.

A considerable amount of the committee’s time has been spent trying to draft a policy on wind turbines that can be applied throughout the West Riding Area. As such a policy needs to be informed by policy at a national level, work has been suspended pending the issue of new policy from Central Office.

There has been no progress during the year on a revised Core Strategy (Local Plan) for Kirklees. However, at the time of writing an initial consultation has begun to develop the options for the Local Plan that will go out for consultation in 2015.

Proposals were unveiled to develop 190 houses on part of the 600 acres owned by the Thornhill Estates around the Grimsgar Valley in the green belt to the north of Huddersfield. Concerns remain about the proposed developments on Thornhill land at Ainley Top, and the possibility of up to 200 houses on 10.5 hectares at Smithy Place, Honley.

In Leeds there has interestingly been no sign of construction taking place of the large solar PV farm at East Ardsley, mentioned in last year’s report.

Outline planning applications for a number of large housing developments on sites in north and east Leeds that had previously been protected in the Unitary Development Plan have been refused. In the absence of an adopted Core Strategy, the Council produced an interim policy that sites other than protected sites should be brought forward for development first. It remains to be seen whether any of the applicants appeal. The Core Strategy continued through its Public Examination with modifications required by the Inspector subjected to consultation during the summer. The final version is to be presented for adoption by the full council at its meeting in November.

The Ramblers through its Leeds Group objected to two planning applications for single wind turbines (45 meters to tip) in adjoining farms in the green belt south of Rothwell. This is a delightful area of Leeds in the heart of the rhubarb triangle with no tall structures of a similar height in the locality. One application was refused and the other withdrawn. The Group would not have objected to smaller turbines or solar panels on the roof area at one of the farms.

In Wakefield, the first phase (500 homes) of the proposed £500m “City Fields” development, ultimately providing 2,700 homes, has been approved. It includes the first phase of the Wakefield Eastern Relief Road. The Ramblers Wakefield Group is monitoring the impact the proposals may have on the environment, including 2 km of canal waterfront.

The proposed drift mine on a previous industrial site between Crofton and Wintersett was approved. This site is the location of a future HS2 maintenance depot. The planning application for Deanfield Opencast Mine between Crofton, Heath and Sharleston was refused. A planning application for the five towns Retail Park on green belt land between Castleford and Pontefract includes a new stadium for Castleford Rugby League Club and a small (50 acre) country park. On the other side of the M62 a 917 homes development together with business space and community facilities is proposed. A country park with footpaths is proposed on the adjacent Prince of Wales Colliery site. Ideally, these two country parks need to be linked.

A new development of a discount food store together with seven shops is proposed alongside Redhall Lane, Wrenthorpe. Outline planning permission has been granted for an adjacent housing development of 1,234 homes. A 1000 new homes are proposed on former industrial land in Castleford. A 42m high cold store is being built on land at Newmarket between Leeds and Wakefield which will affect the open view previously enjoyed by walkers on the local towpath.

Campaigners did win a battle to stop a new road together with 68 houses being built through green belt land at Newton Hill, Wakefield, when a planning application was rejected.

It is hoped that the part of the Local Development Framework relating to policies and site allocations for leisure, recreation and open spaces will be adopted by 2016.
FOOTPATHS SUB-COMMITTEE

The committee held four well attended meetings in the year. The agenda was full, varied, and documentation well prepared beforehand. Committee members include footpath officers from the thirteen groups, and all members bring a considerable wealth of complementary skills and experience. Challenges to our Rights of Way network continue. The minutes of our meetings record only a small amount of the ongoing work carried out by committee members. Interventions at local level oversee and protect all the paths, thus ensuring the walking environment is kept in continual focus. Wider strategic footpath issues are also discussed, whether from RA Central Office, regional local authorities and organisations or Government.

Local authority budget cuts have been discussed as to the best response. LAs experienced differing levels of cuts to both resources and staffing. Various alternatives have been suggested and discussions are continuing. For instance, should we be instigating legal action against LAs for persistent obstructions, lobbying councillors for more funds or looking at a completely different approach? The effect of budget cuts may not be immediately obvious, though the potential for the slow decay of stiles, the deterioration of signage and the increase in vegetation will make walking the PROW network increasingly difficult. It is vital that all footpath problems are reported as a data evidence base can be used to argue the case and campaign for resources, repairs, and even improvements. The committee members’ knowledge of individual PROW departments’ budgets, issues and priorities is strong, aided by good relationships with the PROW officers. A positive meeting was held with Leeds PROW and Parks & Countryside officers where the already good rapport was further developed. Officers work hard in an increasingly difficult economic climate.

Volunteer Working Party activity has made substantial progress thanks to the efforts of Lower Wharfedale Group. Training has taken place in assessment of path problems and it is expected that materials and authority to carry out practical footpath work will be given by the LAs.

Visits from RA Central Office were had from Naseem Akhtar, Board of Trustees Vice Chair, who went on a walk and attended the February Footpath Committee meeting. This gave members a chance to highlight particular footpath issues “on the ground” and also to show the effective working of the committee. The RA CEO, Benedict Southworth paid a visit to Area Council. Again a walk was organised, this time on the edge of Harrogate. Benedict is engaging as a speaker, very aware and committed to footpath matters and responds well to various viewpoints. On the walk Benedict expressed his support, amongst many other points, for making roads safer at footpath crossings.

West Riding Area put a successful motion to General Council at Liverpool in April. This was on increasing the amount of waymarking throughout the PROW network. Many paths are signposted at the point where they leave roads; however, it is along the length of the path that navigation issues can occur, even for walkers with reasonable map reading skills. Waymarks are an effective, easy, and cheap solution to keeping paths used. They can go on gate and stile posts, and on their own wooden posts. In times of depleted resources, waymarks are are clearly visible and some LAs add the ROW status (e.g. footpath, bridleway) and their website for contact.

The Area Footpath Survey has continued for another year and provides valuable data and an overview of the state of the path network. A huge thanks to all the contributors to the survey who have each put in many hours of walking specific paths.

A very useful and thoughtful draft paper on wind turbines was presented by Richard Smith. It suggested guidance to Area footpath officers for wind farms proposed or erected near to ROWs.

Other footpath matters:

A footpath at Ilkley Squash Club which is also on the Dales Way was visited over proposals for an extension of the car park. Safer walking aspects were suggested and implemented. Footpath “rationalisation” plans proposed by North Yorkshire for small specific parts of the network have been carefully considered.

Woodhall Bridge on the boundary of North Yorkshire and Leeds, which the Ebor Way goes over, should be repaired in the near future.

Surfaces on towpaths have been examined, using Canal and River Trust guidelines. Cycle use on footpaths has been noted and it seems to be increasing on certain paths. Putting the ROW status on signage may help clarify to cyclists which routes they may use.

The draft Deregulation Bill continues to make its way through parliament and is being closely monitored for aspects relating to footpath legal changes.

A joint letter with the Countryside Committee was submitted over the proposed route of HS2. which affects 37 ROW and 4 permissive paths in West Riding Area including the Trans Pennine Trail and the Leeds Country Way. The need for high quality replacement crossings for any ROWs severed, satisfactory diversion routes, and enhancements to the ROW network wherever possible was submitted.

A major development of a relief road near to Heath and Stanley Ferry would threaten a major recreational walking area.

Burley Bridge application proposals continue to be strongly supported.

“WalkLeeds”, the West Riding Area Festival of Walking in 2015, has the involvement of some Footpath Committee members.

The resignation of Bri Derbyshire, footpath officer for Ripon, was received. Bri put a considerable amount of time into the role and contribution. Bri very kindly stayed on until a replacement was found. Marguerite Moss has now taken over. David Nunns also resigned from the Committee. David has attended Footpath Committee meetings
Committee members in their Group territories have achieved a considerable amount over the year, and the Committee is fortunate to have such dedicated individuals all contributing to the protection and enhancement of the ROW network and the walking environment. Please report all path problems to both the local authority and the footpath officer of the local Group, and, if you can, always carry secateurs and walk the less well trod paths. Happy wandering.

Martin Bennett, Chair

PUBLICITY AND PUBLICATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

The new West Riding Area website, re-built from scratch, has now been functioning successfully for over a year.

Combined with our growing presence on Facebook, the website is providing a great tool for reaching out to both new and existing members online getting visited by on average 1,000 different visitors a month. According to the data provided to us from Google, the website is also connecting us to a younger audience with a third of visitors being in the 25-34 year old age bracket.

The West Riding Rambler, published quarterly, continues to be of a high standard. The editors have included a wide variety of articles that reflect the many activities of the Ramblers’ Association in the West Riding Area. Articles which promote discussion on issues affecting the walking community have also been included. Every attempt has been made to achieve a good spread of news throughout the West Riding Area. Contributions (articles, suggested articles, photos, letters to the editors) are always welcome. The West Riding Rambler has an attractive lay-out and colour photos, and looks good – this is important because it is also a public document.

The Walks Programme also looks good, and it continues to be an important publication for West Riding Area and its members. The programme listed over 600 walks during the year with a wide range of distances. There are several walks each Saturday and Sunday, and walks on most days of the week. Nearly all of the walks are re-produced in the Walks Diary on the Area website. The compilation of the walks programme is an outstanding combined effort with many people involved, and of course including the walks leaders, and the walks collectors. Many thanks to them all.

Samantha Waddington now looks after the distribution of the West Riding Rambler and Walks Programme, an important and often taken for granted job. Many thanks to Samantha for doing it so efficiently. Groups are asked to bear in mind that they can include a newsletter or flyer in the quarterly mailing.

We had a stall at several local shows: Honley, Bingley, Keighley and Nidderdale. Next year it is intended to include Otley. The shows are good local publicity. Particular thanks to Mike Church for arranging a stall at the shows, transporting the stands and publicity materials, and being on duty for most of the day. Thanks also to the others who helped - but we could do with a few more!

Over the year, work has been proceeding on organising “WalkLeeds”, the Leeds Festival of Walks which will take place from 31st May to 7th June. The event is being organised by a special sub-committee formed from Publicity & Publications Committee and Social & Rambles Committee, together with several other valued members who are contributing their time, energy and expertise. Around fifty walks of a wide variety of distances and locations will be in the programme. Leeds Council is becoming substantially involved and giving strong support. The festival should generate considerable publicity.

Keith Wadd, Convenor

SOCIAL & RAMBLES SUB-COMMITTEE

A number of Sunday walks have been submitted by the West Riding Area for the Winter/Spring walk programme. Many thanks to Val Bamforth and Helen Beaven for proof reading all groups walk data on the website.

Monthly coach rambles remain popular. However, a decline in numbers has been noted recently. We would encourage members who would like to join in the coach rambles to contact Val Bamforth (01274 591678) or Hilary Bulmer (01924 863660) to check availability. There are always a number of walks from B to A+, a good meal at a reasonable cost and a friendly atmosphere. Contrary to an age old myth there are places available. Do come and join us!

The last nine coach rambles have seen us complete Lady Anne’s Way, a long distance walk done in stages starting from Skipton and ending in Penrith. Many thanks to all the walks leaders. As always, thanks go to Hilary Bulmer and Val Bamforth for their hard work organising the coach rambles. Thanks also go to Terry Jacques for organising the Christmas Coach ramble & dinner at Skipton Golf Club after walks in the Skipton area.

Tony Hatton retired in July as chairman of the S&R Committee. A letter of thanks was sent to Tony thanking him for his years of hard work, dedication and walks leadership. Tony was a very valuable part of the S&R team and will be greatly missed. Following Tony’s retirement, Diane Davies took over as chairman.

Sue de Verteuil stepped down as as secretary following relocation to Horton in Ribblesdale. Sue will remain on the S&R Committee and continue to assist with the Walks Programme. Helen Beaven has kindly volunteered to resume the position of secretary.

A five day coach ramble to Eastbourne in May was attended by 30 members. The seafront hotel served good food and offered value for money. A varied selection of walks was enjoyed by all. A long weekend at Seahouses was attended by 31 members, staying at the Bamburgh Castle Hotel. The hotel was in a superb location overlooking the harbour and Farne Islands. Excellent meals and a good selection of walks were enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Hilary Bulmer for arranging two more first class holidays.

Diane Davies, Chairman
GROUP REPORTS

BRADFORD GROUP

Regular meetings were held when all aspects of Ramblers’ business were discussed. Chris Moore dealt with numerous path matters in his usual efficient manner. We have advertised on our website for an assistant to Chris but no one has so far been forthcoming. If anyone in Bradford Group feels he/she can help, please contact Chris.

The Walks Programme is still the envy of many. Although numbers have dropped slightly, regular walks summer and winter are run. Many thanks to Muriel O’Flaherty and David Beetham and their team for their help. If you feel you can lead a walk please contact Muriel. If your ageing secretary can lead a Walk in the Dark (when he remembers) anyone can (support and training will be offered). Our group website is running well and is very popular. Thanks to Kevin for this. John Chadwick keeps our finances in good order and thanks to him Bingley is seeking to become a Walkers Welcome town, and the Group is involved in the preparations for this. Bradford Group also had a stall at the Bingley Show and intend to do in 2015.

We look forward to another good year. If you have any ideas or suggestions please contact me.

Malcolm Pitt, Secretary

CALDERDALE GROUP

The Group has had a very active year with quite a few things to think about. David Austin has analysed our Walks Programme and found that 5 to 8 mile walks from Ripponden and Hebden Bridge seem the most popular. Our local M.P. was invited to come on one of our walks and the one he chose was in glorious weather where we were able to voice our complaints over footpath matters – it was a very enjoyable affair.

The contentious issue of a bridleway application on a permissive path between the Bridge Inn and Victoria Mills at Ripponden has at last been resolved. The inspector refused it and we are now hopeful for a definitive map status footpath.

A new publication has been issued, financed by Metro and offering 12 public transport walks from 3 to 12 kms making use of the 901 bus (Hebden Bridge to Huddersfield.

The cutbacks on spending on the rights of way network are worrying, but we are lucky to have volunteers to keep them open.

Our committee members as always are doing a sterling job, and as this is my last report as secretary, I wish to give a big thank you to all the people have been working with in Calderdale and the West Riding Area over the last 32 years. It has been a privilege to have been involved with so many dedicated and knowledgeable people.

Diane Hall, retiring Secretary

CRAVEN GROUP

The Group has again had a full, active and successful year. Membership has held up well; the average number of people taking part in our walks has increased by 20% over last year, and we have had several new walks leaders.

We have given particular emphasis to good publicity over the past year, as we believe this is a major contributory factor in the increased participation in our activities. The Group has its own website, and we are indebted to Linda Copeman who runs and maintains the website on our behalf. Also busy on the publicity front has been Pam Daniels who ensured that the local press, ‘The Dalesman’ magazine, and all the TICs in our area were supplied with our walking programme. ‘The Craven Herald’ newspaper continued to publish brief snippets of information regarding our walks and social activities.

The Group has again had an active year on the social scene, with coach rambles to Osmotherley in May and Buckden in September, from where a group of 23 walked a section of the Lady Anne Clifford Way to Morton in Wensleydale. Had a very successful walking weekend in Patterdale in July, a BBQ in June, and an Annual Dinner in October. All these activities were well supported by members and friends.

Less positively, North Yorkshire County Council’s rights of way section is being re-organised yet again in response to a further 40% government imposed cut on its staff and budget. This probably means that there will be no effective remedial rights of way work carried out in the remainder of this financial year and in the three years from April 2015. We have also noted a large increase in planning applications affecting rights of way, many due to wind turbines on farm land.

The Group’s thanks go to all walks leaders, officers and committee members for their hard work over the past year, and particularly to Henry Mason (Chairman), David Gibson (Treasurer and Footpath Officer) and Jane Gill (Footpath Officer). Jane stepped down at the AGM and has been replaced by Simon Crabb, as the Footpath Officer responsible for footpaths in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Jeff Halden, Secretary

HARROGATE GROUP

Harrogate Group enjoyed another year of achievement working with and for walkers. Our footpath officers had a busy time maintaining a watching brief over the many housing proposals in the area, and we were delighted when a tree preservation order was granted on woods at Flaxby which are traversed by a bridleway and threatened by proposed developments. New permissive routes were opened across land owned by the proprietors of the Yorkshire Show giving increased access to the attractive scenery in the Crimple Valley. We were involved in discussions about the improvements to Holly Bank Lane at Ripley and are pleased

Members of the Harrogate Ramblers walking up to Simons Seat last February.
with the great success of the resurfaced route, building on the popularity of the nearby Nidderdale Greenway.

Following our work with NYCC to improve the signing of the Harrogate Ringway and the Knaresborough Round, Keith Wadd has rewritten the guide leaflets and they are on sale at local Tourist Information centres.

A full programme of Saturday walks and some summer half-day walks continued to have good support, and our five coach rambles (Staithes/Runswick Bay to Whitby; Weardale Way to Durham; Lake District; western Peak District and Lyme Hall; Herriot Way) all enjoyed good weather and operated at a small surplus. Our activities are well publicised in the local press which has been printing a series of walks taken from our publications. We had a good presence of our officers at the Nidderdale Show at Pateley Bridge in September.

Delia Wells, Chair

[Ed. Delia stood down as Chair after the Group’s AGM this November. She was Chair for seven years, taking over from Peter Goldsmith in 2007. Delia has been an energetic, committed and popular Chair, and Harrogate Group has continued to thrive under her leadership. Many thanks, Delia, for all your work for the Group.]

HUDDERSFIELD GROUP

With our packed calendar of walks, holidays and social events, Huddersfield Group members are a favoured breed indeed.

As the only Group in Area now offering a weekend walk of at least 10 miles on a weekly basis, it has become the go-to Group for active walkers from across the Area who like a longer walk at a decent pace. About half our regular walkers do not belong in the Group’s territory and many of these members have brought improvements to our walks programme by contributing walks in their own areas often unfamiliar to native Huddersfield members. This year’s syllabus has not only included visits to old haunts near and far, but also to areas seldom covered by us before: the West Pennine Moors, the Wolds, and Lower Wensleydale to name but a few. One enjoyable walk led by Kevin Thomas introduced us to impressive architecture, Victorian and attractive green areas in and around Bradford city centre.

A highlight for many though was on home turf: the Group’s two walks on 6th July (one from each side of the A616 divide) converging on Holme Moss to watch the Tour de France with thousands of other giddy spectators. Very special thanks to are owed to leaders Eddie Vokes (a one-time 3rd place finisher in the Yorkshire divisional championship) and Stephen Dennison for masterminding this great day out.

It has been a mixed year on the footpaths front, and bad news now looms on the horizon. Readers may remember last year we were delighted to report that planned cuts at Kirklees Council had, almost by accident, seen responsibility for rights of way matters passed to a new department in Council, Streetscene, who, under the energetic direction of the Council’s Head of Enforcement, took to footpaths work with huge enthusiasm. Indeed, it achieved more in 18 months than the preceding five years, with much regular maintenance, a broadly more helpful response to complaints and enforcement action taken on routes that even some Kirklees militants had given up. However, in the first 6 months of 2014 work on Le Tour took priority with Streetscene and since then a notable fall in responsiveness has been discerned. And now a new round of proposed cuts in the Council’s 2015-16 budget looks alarmingly likely to put paid to rights of way work for good.

We accept the competing demands on the Council’s diminishing budget, but the authority’s plans sit very much at odds with its pre-occupation with health, exercise and tourism, in which a well-maintained rights of way network has a vital part to play. At present we gloomily await the precise nature of the Council’s proposals.

The gloom is exacerbated by the fact that most Group members seem to take little or no interest in footpath protection. For too long the burden of reporting paths and demanding action has fallen on the shoulders of a very few people, led by our Footpaths Secretary, Pat Ashton, whose good work has brought about a raft of improvements, including a wholesale overhaul of the Colne Valley Circular Walk, one of our flagship local named routes. One faint light has been the formation of a number of Walkers are Welcome groups in the area who are more active in footpath maintenance. A few members are actively linking with such activities, but overall the Group’s desire to be involved is shamefully low for a group which is so active in other ways. There is no doubt that with harsh budget cuts local authorities are going to depend more on volunteers for footpath maintenance.

In the past year the Group has enjoyed holidays in the Isle of Wight, Windermere, Fort William (where 25 members surmounted Ben Nevis), Grinton Lodge (on the hottest day of the year!) and most recently a wonderful week amidst exciting scenery in Tenerife. Inordinate gratitude is due to Janet Whitaker, our Social Secretary, and Dorothy Woodcock for their sedulous effort in coordinating these trips.

Many thanks too to Lynne Broadbent for organising another superb Christmas party: when belted out by forty slightly tipsy Huddersfield Ramblers, the Proclaimers’ 1980s hit “I’m Gonna Be (500 miles)” has never sounded so good.

Oliver Taylor

KEIGHLEY GROUP

The year has seen steady progress with an average of 20 attending our walks, and given the glorious summer weather we have thoroughly enjoyed each one. We did narrowly miss a serious accident above Pateley Bridge when a large tree blew down very quickly and split the group in two which focused our minds on the need to know what to do if a group member did become seriously injured or even unconscious on a walk. But it is the walking programmes that attract interest in the Group far more than any other activity, and for them we have to thank our walks leaders for taking the trouble to organise them. Without their efforts all those lovely hours spent in the countryside just would not happen, and it’s doubtful whether the Group would continue. So thank you very much, walks leaders, you know who you are and we are very much in your debt.

We do our best to raise the profile of the Ramblers locally and it is reassuring that by doing so we are still able to attract new members. We regularly appear in the Keighley News and this year with the help of the Area Chairman, Mike Church, we took a stand at Keighley Show for the first time, which we thought was worthwhile and will do again. We also have our website which continues to evolve and receive new visitors thanks to the efforts of our webmaster Jeff Maud. We do realise, however, that Ramblers’ fees are not cheap, and are far in excess of competing local walking group charges. So any interest in us at local level is welcome and carefully nurtured. Whether the new proposals to alter the structure of the Ramblers would improve our situation is still being hotly debated in Keighley.

Many thanks to all our members for continuing to support the work of the Ramblers. We are still providing great walks out in the country for anyone who wants to join us, we are still campaigning to improve access to the countryside, and we are still able to influence politicians to extend public rights of way. Long may it continue.

Alex Gardner
LEEDS GROUP

It’s been another busy year. The Leeds Group Committee met six times in the year and has been active between meetings. There has been a regular and varied walks programme and committee members have been in frequent and productive contact with Public Rights of Way officers from Leeds City Council. Budget, membership and secretarial work carried out by committee members has kept the Group solvent and efficiently run.

The previous AGM was held at St Giles Church Hall, Bramhope on 9th November 2013. It was preceded by, as ever, a well-attended local walk. Leeds Group walks are published in the West Riding Area Walks Programme which is also on the West Riding Area website, and on the Leeds Group website. At the AGM a raffle prize was drawn where members had been asked to give their email addresses. This was to aid potential communication between committee and members. The meeting ending with a lively and informative discussion on where the Ramblers as an organisation should be heading over the next ten years.

There have been walks near to home in the Leeds area, and also walks further afield. The walks have varied in length between 5 and 10 miles at both a leisurely and faster pace. These are popular days out and are appreciated by members discovering new locations led by our experienced walk leaders. The social walks also attract new recruits. Committee members have attended various meetings including the Local Access Forum, Leeds Park and Green Spaces Forum, and council meetings. Personal interests, expertise and membership of organisations such as the Canals and Rivers Trust have contributed to the expertise and knowledge of the committee.

Footpath and countryside matters have been important areas for focus throughout the year. Contact with council officials takes place on a frequent basis. Particular footpath matters can be protracted and time-consuming. For example, diversions and Definitive Map Modification Orders can involve several site visits and considerable paperwork. These matters can also include paths, footways and ginnels within the Leeds urban area. St Aidan’s, the former mining site and planned RSPB site, has yet to be fully transferred to Leeds City Council ownership. The Leeds Group donated £1000 to Leeds Public Rights of Way for a match-funded purchase of footpath signage. These are in process of being installed, at locations suggested by committee members, helping to promote our wonderful paths. A new railway footbridge at Morley was opened in December 2013. This was achieved by considerable involvement with both the Council and Network Rail by committee members, ensuring that the footpath did not remain closed. The Thorpe site being developed had considerable input from us to obtain the best outcome for public rights of way. Instances of cyclists using footpaths have been investigated. Planning and wind turbine applications were reviewed throughout the year to ensure both safety to nearby footpaths and protect surrounding views of the countryside. There is considerable detail and contentious issues to consider with any application especially with the pressure to build more houses in Leeds.

“WalkLeeds”, the West Riding Area Festival of Walks for 2015, has heavily involved some of the Leeds Group committee. The Festival has helped further strengthen already good relationships with Parks and Countryside officers which will help promote the best quality walking environment for Leeds. The walks for “WalkLeeds” will all be within the Leeds boundary. Contact with other sympathetic organisations is taking place with a view to more walks being put in place during the week of the Festival.

There was a recent sub-group meeting to look at plans for a Parks and Countryside proposal for a North West Leeds Country Park. This was understood to be similar to the successful West Leeds Country Park already set up. The view was that the plans look very good and would encourage walking and promote the rights of way network. A further meeting and presentation is being sought from Leeds officers to explain and clarify the ideas and proposals.

Committee meetings are held at 7pm at the Oxford Place Methodist Mission in the centre of Leeds, with dates of the meeting on the Group website. Members are warmly encouraged to come and observe proceedings with an option to seek nomination to the committee.

Martin Bennett, Chair

LOWE WHARFEDALE GROUP

The Group has had another successful year, and this year the overall membership is showing that the decline over recent years has been arrested and we have increased our membership on last year. The four mid-week walks that we deliver each week are very well attended and those fortunate people who are not restricted to walking only at the weekend have perhaps played a part in increasing our membership. We are, however, very much aware that only one third of the total membership of the Group participate in our walks.

This year has also seen an improvement in the way our own Walks Programme is compiled. The considerable workload involved in pulling together four programmes each quarter is now more manageable thanks to Len Jones, Alik Ferryhough, Kathy & Geoff Bush and Lynne Noble taking on the responsibility for compiling a group programme each, before sending a copy to Colin & Jill Kershaw, the Walks Coordinators, for distributing to the members. Sharing this workload has made a big improvement to the way we undertake this time consuming but essential part of our responsibilities as a Ramblers Group.

The activities organised by the Social Committee and other volunteers are an integral and important part of our Group’s activities. Once again our efforts this year have ensured a wide and varied range of events were delivered to the benefit of members. This year’s Group holiday in March was to the HF Country House at Derwentwater and was attended by 54 members. Events later in the year included a Chinese meal, the annual summer barbecue in Ilkley, and a Social Evening. Thank you to everyone who has helped to make these events happen.

Monitoring and responding to footpath related issues in our territory continues to be a never ending but rewarding task for our footpath officer, Richard Smith. In the last year, 26 footpath issues have been considered and investigated with more than half requiring a site visit or a response from Richard on behalf of the Ramblers. After a period where little footpath maintenance has taken place in our territory, discussions with the three local councils appear recently to have made some small but significant progress, and agreements have been reached with Bradford and Leeds Councils for reintroducing Ramblers led working parties in the Lower Wharfedale part of their areas.

Kevin Goodings, Secretary

NORTH KIRKLEES GROUP

Before last year’s AGM, I thought that we would have to close the Group due to loss of members on the committee.

At the AGM, several members stepped forward and we now have a vibrant and busy committee. We still have various roles vacant and hope we can fill them next year. Our walk programmes are very popular and attendance has averaged sixteen. Membership over the year has decreased by four.

Visit the Area website www.ramblersyorkshire.org for more area news and past issues
The proposed cuts to the Kirklees Rights of Way budget could mean that we may have to get more involved in PROW maintenance, more than at present. Through our Footpath Secretary, Keith Looker, we are challenging the cuts.

Mike Church, Chair

RIPON GROUP

On Thursday 20th November Ripon Group held their AGM at the Hugh Ripley Hall in Ripon. We welcomed Christine Bennett who agreed to fill the post of Treasurer. This is our third officer change in recent years – which is encouraging new ideas. We continue to have an average of four interesting and well-supported walks each month, plus a local newsletter twice a year.

Barbara Jordan, Secretary

WAKEFIELD GROUP

A successful year again for the combined Wakefield and Castleford/Pontefract Group with good representation from all parts of the area.

We have a strong Group committee with representation on the West Riding Area Footpath Committee by Mike O’Donnell and on Area Countryside Committee by Horace Price. In Wakefield District extensive housing development projects are currently planned and Mike with active involvement in the Local Access Forum is ensuring that footpaths are protected.

Walks are held every weekend with a strong group of leaders. Numbers are not huge but they are regular and extremely friendly and welcoming. We have a full programme of walks this winter season, thanks to our loyal body of leaders. Leaflets have been produced and put in all libraries and places of interest and are handed out to potential new members.

Leaflets have been produced and put in all libraries and places of interest and are handed out to potential new members. A regular piece is put in the local Express newspaper every week and often attracts newcomers, probably more than any other source. Thanks are due to Carole Jones who updates the Walks Finder website.

Unfortunately, our Secretary, Alex Main, resigned mid-year and we are currently without a Secretary and Chairman. This latter post has been vacant since the formation of the new Group. A letter has been sent out to all our members asking for some one to step forward for these roles and we are hoping to appoint a new secretary (and possibly a new chairman) at the AGM to be held on the 11th January.

Steven Wood, the Group’s footpath officer, has regularly attended meetings of the West Riding Area Footpath Committee and the Leeds Access Forum, and has dealt with footpath applications and orders with satisfactory conclusions. Steven has pointed out that because of the financial squeeze, councils had cut back on footpath maintenance work, and some of this will have to be undertaken locally by both Ramblers’ groups and parish councils. If any members are interested in contributing to this work they should get in touch with Steven. Woodhall Bridge which is close to Wetherby should re-open in December, and the opening of the former railway viaduct at Tadcaster is to be determined by public enquiry in February 2015. A proposed diversion at Crosper Farm near Spofforth will take walkers away from a busy farmyard and also cut out the need to walk along the main road.

John Reeman, Chair
WEST RIDING AREA
ANNUAL REPORT

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30th SEPTEMBER 2014

Income Notes

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<td>Net Income from Events</td>
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Less Expenditure

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BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30th SEPTEMBER 2014

EMPLOYMENT OF CAPITAL

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CAPITAL EMPLOYED

Capital Account

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EXAMINER'S STATEMENT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION - WEST RIDING AREA

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group Audit Guidelines, I consider the West Riding Area accounts to have been properly prepared and to give a true and fair view of the West Riding Area's finances for the year to 30 September 2014.

Signed: Stephen Dennison Date: 23 October 2014

Visit the Area website www.ramblersyorkshire.org for more area news and past issues
# Treasurer’s Report for the year ended 30 September 2014

Planned increased funding from Central Office has resulted in the year ending with a more comfortable level of reserves than in the immediate previous years of reduced cash holdings.

Income from book sales was moderate and welcome but cannot be relied upon in future years. The Area was very fortunate in receiving a generous legacy of £2,000 from Marjorie Briggs during the year. This has now been allocated to supporting the Leeds Festival of Walks due to take place in the spring of 2015.

Payments in support of Groups was lower this year reflecting reduced requests for financial assistance. The funds previously held to assist with the Burley Bridge project were paid over at the request of the Burley Bridge Association. Other income and expenditure is of a routine nature.

The explanatory notes aid understanding of the Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet. As is the custom at the AGM these financial papers will be taken as read but there will be the opportunity for comments and questions.

Derrick Watt  
West Riding Area treasurer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>£</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full year budgeted funding from Central Office</td>
<td>28,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Book Sales for year</td>
<td>1,612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock revaluation: Opening at 1 October 13</td>
<td>7,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing at 30 September 14</td>
<td>7,490</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost of books sold</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net income from book sales</td>
<td>1,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach fares, hotel accommodation, etc</td>
<td>11,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach hire, hotel accommodation, etc</td>
<td>11,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net deficit from events</td>
<td>-316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest on Bank accounts</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total investment income</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various donations</td>
<td>718</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gift Aid payment from HMRC</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Other Income</td>
<td>2,884</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production costs for WRR and Walks Programme</td>
<td>8,570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing West Riding Rambler Magazine (WRR)</td>
<td>3,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design costs WRR</td>
<td>1,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing Walks Programmes</td>
<td>2,701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution costs for WRR and Walks Programme</td>
<td>6,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage</td>
<td>5,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envelopes</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mileage</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total costs for WRR &amp; Walks Programme</td>
<td>14,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds Festival of Walks</td>
<td>623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website maintenance</td>
<td>192</td>
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<tr>
<td>General administration</td>
<td>753</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>16,374</td>
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<tr>
<td>The cost of the AGM has to be shown separately</td>
<td>240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net prepayments for 2014-2015 events</td>
<td>2,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The balance held of RA funding to support the Burley Bridge Association in the expense of promoting the building of a bridge over the River Wharfe at Burley in Wharfedale was paid to BBA during the year at their request.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CLAIMING FOR STILE INJURIES

Keith Wadd’s article on falls in the last edition is a timely one. I remain constantly surprised by how falls can happen with the speed of light – one minute the world is of distant horizons; the next second you’re examining worm trails close up and are too winded and surprised to care. At least these have the merit of being quick! The falls which really annoy me are those that take forever, as you feel your feet going as you descend a slope, and fight to grab something, anything, to stay upright. Having firmly grasped a hawthorn branch with consequent suffering, you then discover that it’s now the other foot moving in the opposite direction which finally brings you and the thorns down heavily on your coccyx. Generally, these tumbles have the merit of losing your dignity at most. And getting a wet behind.

There are, more soberly, other places where falls can be considerably more serious, and that is at stiles. The steps of these, be they wood or stone, are often slippery with moss or algae, and require patience and care to negotiate. It would be possible to prove negligence here, but tricky. However, there are stiles where despite, despite your best efforts, a rotten step gives way beneath you; you slip on the algae covered step and uncovered barbed wire round a hand post gouges you; or your boot heel (as happened to me) catches on wire across a stile and causes you to crash heavily forward, your boot still firmly trapped. Broken bones can and do result from these falls.

So from whom to seek compensation? In the first instance always from the landowner, who is legally responsible for the maintenance in safe condition of all stiles, gates and bridges on his land.

Councils are not able, under data protection legislation, to tell you who owns the land, quite astonishingly; and you will need to pay a fee to the Land Registry to find this out. This you can claim from the landowner too. Write to him, explain the circumstances, ask for a sum to cover your costs (travel expenses, Land Registry charges, medical bills, lost wages) and a reasonable sum to cover pain and suffering. This may well not end up a small figure. And although most landowners have public liability insurance, he may well turn your claim down.

In which case you can pursue the claim in the county court for about £50 in court and hearing costs (all reclaimable too). Take photos of the stile’s problem (if possible with a measure to show height); get as accurately as possible its position; and bring doctor’s and any witness’s written statements as evidence too, [if it gets that far]. The landowner, once he sees you have sent initial papers to court, is more likely to deal with you than not. And given the circumstances of the accident the likelihood of you not getting at least something over and above are pretty good.

Finally, bear in mind the case where a highway authority had failed to ensure that repairs ordered to the offending stile had been carried out. To quote a RoW officer I know: “In the case of the highway authority not enforcing the landowner’s obligation to make the necessary repairs then you can still sue the landowner. You may also wish to consider a complaint to the highway authority for some redress in respect of failing to take action. If the highway authority does not provide a satisfactory answer to the complaint under its complaints procedure then you could pursue the complaint with the local government ombudsman. The LGO would decide if there has been maladministration, and what, if any, redress should be given to the complainant”

Falls don’t always have to hurt that much.

Allan Friswell